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## WISCONSIN'S GENDER WAGE GAP GROWS

Regardless of Educational Attainment, Wage Gap Remains High

April 28, 2009 (Madison). Today is National Pay Equity Day – the day which symbolizes how far into the year a woman must work, on average, to earn as much as a man earned the previous year.

Over the more than four and one-half decades since the Equal Pay Act of 1963, women have made enormous strides in access to the workforce and jobs once exclusively the domain of men. And, women now make up more than half of the graduates of many of Wisconsin's colleges and universities. The fact remains, however, that equal pay continues to elude women – irrespective of race, age or level of education.

**Wisconsin Workers – Median Hourly Wages**



Source: Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) analysis of 2007 American Community Survey data;

### Wisconsin's Gender Wage Gap Grows

The gender wage gap has gotten wider since the Wisconsin Women's Council's 2008 wage gap report. Based on new data from the Center on Wisconsin Strategy ([www.cows.org](http://www.cows.org)), women earn only about 77 cents on the dollar compared to men – a widening of the gap from 78 cents in the 2008 report. Wisconsin also lags behind the national gender wage gap of 79.9 cents on the dollar. *Wisconsin figures are based on 2007 median hourly wages for all workers, the most current year for which data are available.*

The wage gap also widened for younger working women. Women ages 25-35 earned slightly under 84 cents on the dollar compared to men – versus 85 cents on the dollar in our 2008 report.

### Do Younger Women Escape the Wage Gap?

Like their mothers, younger women, in their late 20s and early 30s, face a gender gap in wages at every level of education. One sign of progress is the fact that the gap for young educated women is narrower than for women in the overall population, meaning that some younger women earn wages closer to young men's wages. Even so, women start out in the labor force with a significant gap – one that is present at all levels of educational attainment.

In 2007, younger women (ages 25-35):

- ♦ with a high school diploma earned 24 percent less than their male peers; while women with some college experience, but no two- or four-year degree, earned 19 percent less.
- ♦ with a bachelor's degree fare better, but still earn wages 11 percent below their similarly educated male peers.
- ♦ with the largest wage gap, at 31 percent, are those who have not attained a high school diploma or the equivalent.

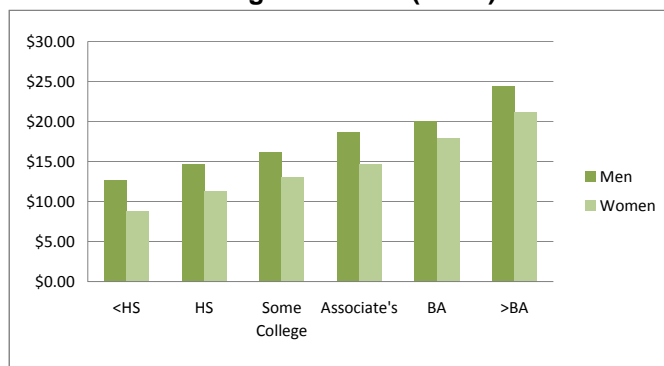
While the story for young working women is mixed, we can expect the gender wage gap to persist as long as young women start out in the workforce lagging in wages compared with their male counterparts.

The gender gap hampers the contributions of all working women – not only to their own income, but to their family's and the state's economic vitality as well. Young women, in particular, should take note that the pay gap is not a thing of the past. These data confirm that even today, women leaving college and entering the workforce start out their careers with a gap compared with their similarly educated male counterparts – and that gap is growing. It is clear that gains in access to the workforce and educational attainment alone will not eliminate the pay gap. Moreover, areas of progress for Wisconsin women overall masks even more troubling figures for Wisconsin's women of color in wage inequalities.

### Wisconsin's Gender Wage Gap - Highlights

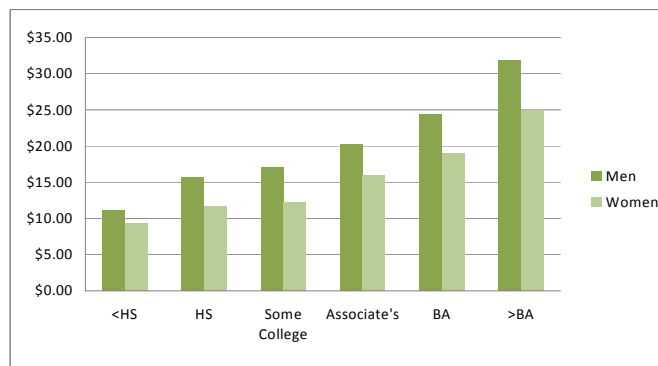
- With a median hourly wage of \$13.96 in 2007, Wisconsin women's wages were about 22.7 percent lower than men's (compared to 22.2 percent in 2006). At the 2007 rate, a full-time, woman worker in the state would earn around \$29,000 per year, on average, compared with over \$37,500 for men.
- For women ages 25-35, the 2007 median hourly wage of \$14.30 was 16.4 percent below the men's median for that age group (compared to 14.7 percent in 2006). This despite the fact that the median wage for younger women was slightly higher than the median wage for all women.
- The good news for Wisconsin women may be that attaining a college degree pays off in increased wages and a narrower wage gap. Even for young women with a college degree, however, the pay gap persists.

**Educational Attainment & Wages  
Younger Workers (25-35)**



Source: Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) analysis of 2007 American Community Survey data; median hourly wages.

**Educational Attainment & Wages  
All Workers**



Source: Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) analysis of 2007 American Community Survey data; median hourly wages.

### National Trends

According the Institute for Women's Policy Research's (Washington, D.C.), the ratio of women's to men's median weekly earnings for full-time workers was 79.9 nationally. This represents the third consecutive decline in the weekly earnings ratio since the historical high of 81.0 in 2005. IWPR also reported that men out earn women in nearly every occupation for which data are available. Of the more than 500 occupational categories for which sufficient data are provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in only five occupations do women earn the same or more than men. Men also earn more than women even in jobs that are most common among women, such as administrative assistant (women earn 83.4 cents for a man's dollar); elementary and middle school teachers (87.6 cents) and registered nurses (87.4 cents). For more information on these national reports, see [www.iwpr.org](http://www.iwpr.org).